

Margherita Farina,
Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa

A SURVEY ON SEMITIC VERBAL *T-FORMS*: STATUS QUAESTIONIS

1 Inventory of forms and main functions

1.1 Verbal (-)*t*- affix

The basic function commonly indicated for Semitic (-)*t*- affix is *reflexive* marker. In addition, this morpheme can express *reciprocal* and *passive* meaning. The latter can also be conveyed by the *n*- prefix and by internal apophony. The (-)*t*- morpheme is either prefixed to the root (in that case it is usually preceded or followed by a vowel, because Semitic languages do not allow the sequence CC at the beginning of a word), or infixes after the first root-consonant. When the first root-consonant is a dental, the (-)*t*-affix, if unvocalized, is assimilated.

This affix is not uniformly represented in the various Semitic languages. In Akkadian and Ugaritic it is widespread and can be used with almost all verbal stems (except for N). In Arabic there exist three *t*-stems: one is built upon the basic stem and the others upon derived ones. In Aramaic the (-)*t*-morpheme is widely productive and has progressively specialized in the expression of passive meaning, together with the disappearance of the internal passive. Thus a system of oppositions has developed, in which a *t*-passive corresponds to every verbal stem. In Western Neo-Aramaic the *t*-forms have been preserved, whereas in Eastern Neo-Aramaic, by the influence of the Iranian adstratum, *t*-forms have been almost completely lost, at least as a productive

derivational process. They are nevertheless preserved in participles employed in the construction of the periphrastic passive.

Reflexive value

1. Biblical Hebrew - 1K 20:22

<i>wa-yyo'mer</i>	<i>l-ô</i>	<i>lek</i>	<i>hitḥazzaq</i>
conj. 'and'+III m. sg. impf. conv.	prep. 'to'+pron.III m. sg.	ipv. qal III m. sg. 'go'	ipv. hithp. III m. sg. 'be strong'
'say'			

'And he said to him: strengthen yourself!'

qal (basic stem) - *ḥāzaq* 'to be strong';

pi'el (intensive/causative stem) - *ḥizzaq* 'to make strong';

hithpa'el (reflexive of the *pi'el* stem) - *hitḥazzeq* 'to strengthen oneself'.

2. Classical Arabic

<i>tanaššafa</i>	<i>bi-tawbi-hi</i>	<i>l-ḡadīdi</i>
III m. sg. pf. V form 'dry oneself'	prep. 'in, with' + 'garment' + suff. pron. III m. sg. 'his'	det. art.+ adj. 'new'

'He dried himself with his new garment'.

basic stem - *našafa* 'to soak, to become soaked';

II form (intens./ caus. stem) - *naššafa* 'to dry';

V form (reflexive of the II form) - *tanaššafa* 'to dry oneself'.

3. Akkadian¹

<i>šamnam</i>	<i>iptašaš-ma</i>
acc. m. sg. 'oil'	III m. sg. pret. 'anoint' (+ ventive)

'He anointed himself with oil'.

G stem (basic) - *pašāšu* 'anoint';

Gt stem (reflexive of G) - *piššušum* (< * *pitšušum*) 'to anoint oneself'.

Passive value:

4. Classical Arabic

<i>ğa'ala</i>	<i>la-kumu</i>	<i>l-nuğūma</i>	<i>li-tahtadū</i>
III m. sg. pf. 'create'	prep. 'to' + suff. pron. II m. pl.	det. art. + 'stars'	prep. 'to' + II m. pl. ipf. VIII f. 'to guide'

'He created the stars for you to be guided'.

basic form - *hadā* 'to guide';

VIII form - *ihtadā* 'to be (well) guided'.

Reciprocal value:

5. Biblical Hebrew - Gen 42:1

<i>lāmmāh</i>	<i>titrā'û</i>
why	II m. pl. ipf. hithp. 'see'

'Why do you look at each other?'

¹ The example is taken from Huehnergard (2005:397).

qal - rā'āh 'to see';

pi'el - not attested;

hithpa'el - hithrā'eh 'to look at each other'.

1.2 History of the (-)*t*- affix: some hypothesis of reconstruction

The (-)*t*- affix has different forms and positions in the various dialects. It must be added that variation occurs also inside the single languages, depending on whether the morpheme attaches to the basic stem or to a derived one. While Biblical Hebrew has only one prefixed *t*-form, built upon the D-stem, Akkadian has several *t*-forms, all constructed by infixation. By contrast Classical Arabic has both prefixed and infixed *t*-forms, according to the stem.

The problems related to the origin and history of the (-)*t*- affix involve basically two topics: *a.* the spreading and extension of use in the various dialects; *b.* the position of the morpheme (prefixed or infixed).

In Diem (1982) both topics are thoroughly discussed, and the conclusions are broadly shared by the scholars. Diem analyses the situation of the following languages: Aramaic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Classical Arabic, Ugaritic, Early South Arabian, Ethiopic, Akkadian and Modern South Arabian.

Aramaic, Hebrew and Phoenician are characterized by the so-called *Metathesisregel*, a process in which, in roots beginning with a sibilant, the (-)*t*- affix is infixed after the first root-consonant. Otherwise it is always prefixed. This phenomenon is usually explained as due to the general tendency of Semitic languages to avoid the sequence DS. In the other languages (except for Ethiopic), there is a complementary distribution of the forms respectively with prefixed and infixed (-)*t*-: the infix is selected by the basic stem, the prefix by all other stems.

Most scholars have considered the metathesis - which in Aramaic, Hebrew (and Phoenician) is limited to a subset of the lexical roots - as the source of the infixed -*t*-forms in the various languages. Proto-Semitic would have formed derived stems only by means of prefixes (*n-*, *š-*, *h-*, *t-*, *'-*); in the roots beginning with a sibilant, the *t*-

morpheme would have undergone a metathesis. Subsequently this phenomenon would have been extended to all other roots, creating the stem with infixes *-t-*.

As noticed by Diem (1982), this reconstruction is not completely satisfactory, mainly because it does not explain the presence of both infixes and prefixed *(-)t-* in several languages. According to Diem, the distribution of the morpheme in the various dialects is related to other phonetic changes. The basic elements of his reconstruction are the alternation of *(-)t-* and *ta-* and the alternation of prefix and infix forms. Diem observes that, while *-t-* can be both prefixed and infix, *ta-* can only be prefixed to the verbal root. Therefore, he supposes that the *(-)t-* affix derives from a reduction of an original *ta-* in particular contexts, i.e. after a CV structure, as in **yataqatil>*yatqatil*.

In roots beginning with a sibilant, however, this reduction would have generated a DS sequence, which would subsequently have undergone metathesis. Finally, in some dialects, the *Metathesisregel* would have been extended to all roots, regardless of the nature of the first root-consonant.

In Stempel (1999) there is a significant objection to Diem's reconstruction. The Arabic VIII form, with infixes *-t-* (corresponding to the Akkadian structure) seems to be older than the ones with prefixed *ta-*. In the first one the imperfect is vocalized according to the rules of apophony (*iqtatata - yaqtatilu*), while in the others it simply follows the vocalization of the perfect (*taqattala - yataqattalu*).

To this objection a few more may be added. The Metathesis-Theory presupposes, for Proto-Semitic verb, a highly regular derivational system, in which all derived stems were built by means of prefixes. A sort of *de-regularization* would then have occurred, with the creation of an infixes *-t-* stem. Another problem is the hypothesis that the infix forms derive from the generalization of a process, that in the beginning was (and in some languages, like Hebrew, remained) conditioned by the presence of a sibilant, as first root consonant. Although they are quite frequent, their number does not justify the dragging of the entire lexicon.

Lipiński (1997) seems to reconstruct an original position of the *(-)t-* affix after the first root-consonant, and not outside the root.

1.3 The expression of reflexive in Semitic languages

As mentioned above, Semitic languages use different strategies to express reflexive meaning. Besides (-)t- affix, they use other affixes and various nominal periphrasis.

a. The *n*-prefix

It is a prefix that, as (-)t-, can have both passive and reflexive meaning. It only attaches to the basic stem. In Akkadian it is also vocalized according to the vocalization of the basic stem, which does not occur for the other derived stems. Moreover, the reflexive meaning is rare in Akkadian. It has to be noticed that Semitic languages tend to avoid the expression of the agent, in a passive structure. Therefore the distinction between reflexive and passive meaning is often unclear.

Passive value

6. Biblical Hebrew - Ruth 1:17

<i>ba-'ašer</i>	<i>tāmūtī</i>	<i>'āmūt</i>	<i>wə-šām</i>	<i>'eqqābber (*'e-n-qabber)</i>
prep. 'in' + rel. pron.	II f. sg. ipf. 'die'	I sg. ipf. 'die'	'and' + adv. 'there'	I sg. ipf. nif'al 'bury'

'Where you will die I will die, and there I will be buried'

qal - qābar 'to bury';

nif'al - niqbar 'to be buried'.

Reflexive value

7. Biblical Hebrew - 2S 20:10

<i>wa- 'amāsā</i>	<i>lō'</i>	<i>nišmar</i>	<i>ba-ḥereb</i>
'and' + Amasa	not	III m. sg. pf. nif'al 'watch'	prep. 'in, with' + 'sword'

'And Amasa did not protect himself from the sword...'

qal - *šamar* 'to watch, to keep' ;

nif'al - *nišmar* 'to be on one's guard'.

The *n*-prefix is also used, in Post-Biblical Hebrew, in *nithpa'el* forms, in which the *n*- is prefixed to the derived stem with prefixed *t*-.

8. Mishnaic Hebrew - 'Erubin V i, 53a

<i>bnē</i>	<i>yahūdah</i>	<i>še-hiqpîdû</i>	<i>'al</i>
pl. constr. st. 'son'	Judah	rel. + III m. pl. pf. hifil 'care for'	prep. 'on'
<i>lāšôn-ām</i>	<i>nitqayyāmāh</i>	<i>tôrât-ām</i>	<i>bə-yād-ām</i>
'language' + pron. III m. pl.	III f. sg. pf. nithpa'el 'to stand'	'law' + suff. III m. pl.	prep. 'in' + 'hand' + suff.pron. III m. pl.

'The Judeans who cared for their language, their law was preserved in their hands'.

qal - *qûm* 'to stand, to stand up;

hithpa'el - *hitqayyêm* and *nitpa'el*- *nitqayyêm* 'to be established, to be preserved'.

Siebesma (1991) analyses Hebrew *nif'al*, also in its relationship with the other passive and reflexive stems. He concludes that it is not possible to formally distinguish

between passive and reflexive function, in Biblical Hebrew. This is due to the tendency to leave the agent unexpressed: “One may ask to what extent Biblical Hebrew allows for the distinction reflexive/passive for the ni.”². He notices that, in the Biblical Text, *nif'al* forms to be translated with a passive are much more frequent than the ones to be translated with a reflexive. This result contrasts with the assumption of Joüon (1923), that the original meaning of the *nif'al* is reflexive of the basic stem, and that only in some cases it can have passive meaning³.

b. Periphrastical structures

Several Semitic dialects have nominal periphrasis that convey reflexive meaning. They are usually built with nouns indicating ‘body’, body parts, ‘soul’, followed by a pronominal suffix referring to the subject. For example:

- Akk. *ramān* ‘body’: *ramaš-šu ipaṭṭar* ‘he will redeem himself’;
- Classical Arabic *nafsun* ‘soul’: *qatala nafsa-hu* ‘he killed himself’;
- Mišnaic and Medieval Hebrew ‘*ešem* ‘bone’: *wa-tippol 'āšmā-h min ha-sūs* ‘and she threw herself from the horse’ (*Mishle Sendebbar*, lin.525 ed. Epstein).⁴

c. Akkadian *-tan-* infix

The Akkadian *-tan-* is a morpheme that has no parallel in any other Semitic language. E.g.: *aštanappar* ‘I sent you regularly’, *aktanarrabakkum* ‘I continuously pray you’.

According to Kurilowicz (1972) the presence of a nasal element in this morpheme is due to a re-interpretation of a second geminated root-consonant. In Akkadian a CC sequence can be interpreted as C+C or as *n*+C. A D stem *uparris* has a Dt reflexive *uptarris* in preterite tense, *uptarras* in the present. Analysing *-rr-* as <*-nr-, a form like

² Siebesma (1991:34).

³ Joüon (1923:§51c).

⁴ The structure ‘*ešem* + pronoun with reflexive meaning is often preceded by the *nota accusativi*: ‘*en 'ādām mešim 'et 'ašmō rāšā*’ ‘a man cannot make himself guilty’ (Y^b. 25b).

**uptanris* can be reconstructed, to which is given a correspondent *uptanarras* in the present. From the latter, a *-tan-* suffix is derived, with an independent meaning, mainly iterative or habitual (Huenergard: “The Gtn and other *-tan-* stems have an iterative force; they express repeated, habitual or continuous action”⁵).

A different reconstruction of the link between frequentative *-tan-* and reflexive *-t-* (using data from Libico-Berber and Ugaritic) found is in Lipiński (1997:411-413).

It is finally important to notice that a Ntn stem exists: the *-tan-* infix can be applied to an N stem, which is not possible for infixed *-t-*.

1.4 Reciprocal

In Semitic languages (but also in many other languages not belonging to the Semitic group) the expression of the reciprocal is closely related, on the morphological level, to that of the reflexive. In several Semitic languages, the reciprocal can thus be expressed by means of a (-)*t*-affix.

Classical Arabic expresses the reciprocal by means of two stems, the III (*fā'ala*) and the VI (*tafā'la*). The second stem is derived from the first one adding the prefix *ta-*. The two stems differ in meaning, because of the point of view from which the reciprocity is described. The III stem expresses a reciprocal action on the side of the grammatical subject: *qataltu zaydan* ‘I killed Zaid’, *qātaltu zaydan* ‘I fought with Zaid’. The VI form, instead, expresses reciprocity in itself, from the point of view of both elements involved: *taqātala* ‘to fight one against the other’.

⁵ Huenergard (2005:411).

8. Classical Arabic

α.

<i>nāšara</i>	<i>l-muḥibbu</i>	<i>l-maḥbūba</i>
III m. sg. pf. III	det art.. + nom.	det art.. + acc. m.
'help o.s. with'	m. sg. 'lover'	sg. 'beloved'

Literally: 'The lover helped himself together with the beloved'

β.

<i>tanāšara</i>	<i>l-muḥibbu</i>	<i>wa-l-maḥbūbu</i>
III m. sg. pf. VI 'to	det art.. + nom.	'and' + det art.. +
help each other'	m. sg. 'lover'	nom. m. sg. 'beloved'

'The lover and the beloved helped each other'.

Like the reflexive, the reciprocal can be expressed with a nominal periphrasis, in most cases using the root *'*ḥw*' 'brother'.

2 Uses and meanings

2.1 Other meanings of *t*-forms in Semitic languages

So far I referred to the main values that (-)*t*-affix, in its various shapes, assumes in Semitic languages. Nevertheless there are many other possible uses of this morpheme, and the relationship between them is often hard to recognize.

In descriptions of the various Semitic languages, about *t*-forms, beside the values somehow related to reflexivity, we frequently find labels such as: durative, continuous, frequentative, habitual, iterative. In many cases it is also difficult to clearly distinguish the meaning of the *t*-stem from that of the basic stem.

9. Moabite - Meša Stele (IX sec. a.C.), lines 14 -15

<i>w-y'mr</i>	<i>l-y</i>	<i>kmš</i>	<i>lk</i>	<i>'ḥz</i>	<i>'t</i>	<i>nbh</i>	<i>ʿl</i>	<i>yšr'l</i>
conj.	prep.	Kamoš	ipv. qal III	ipv. qal III	<i>nota</i>	Nebo	prep.	Israel
'and'+III	'to' +		m. sg.	m. sg.	<i>accusativi</i>		'on,	
m. sg.	pron. I		'go'	'take, lift'			to'	
impf. 'say'	sg.							
<i>w-'hlk</i>	<i>b-llh</i>	<i>w-'lḥm</i>	<i>b-h</i>					
'and' + I	prep. 'in'	'e' + I sg.	prep. 'in,					
sg, impf.	+ 'night'	impf. pref-	with' +					
'go'		<i>t-</i> 'fight'	pron. III					
			m. sg.					

'And Kamoš said to me: go, make Nebo rise up against Israel! And I went during the night and I fought against him (scil. Israel)...'.

'lḥm: basic root **lḥm* 'fight'⁶.

2.2 Biblical Hebrew *hithpa'el*

In Hebrew we find several *hithpa'el* forms that, as in the example given above, have a meaning quite similar to the one of the basic stem. Often it is also difficult to relate the meaning of such forms to the idea of reflexivity. Scholars have tried to give various explanations of this phenomenon, pointing to analogies between Hebrew and other Semitic languages. Common to the different theories is the assumption that in the unique *t*-stem of Hebrew have merged many Semitic stems (i.e. with infixed *-t-*, with prefixed *t-* derived from the basic stem and from derived ones etc.).

Speiser (1995) compares some Biblical Hebrew *hithpa'el* forms with some Akkadian *-tan-* forms. He argues that, in some cases, the Hebrew form is what remains of an ancient *-tan-* form, in which the *-n-* element has been lost, but the original

⁶ In Biblical Hebrew this verb is attested mostly in the *nif'al* stem, with the meaning 'to fight'. cf. 2S 12:27: *niḥamti bə-rabbāh* 'I fought with Rabbah'. The basic stem is attested, but always in the book of Psalms and only three times: once in the imperative (Ps 35:1) and two times in the participle (Ps 35:1, Ps 56:2).

semantic value - defined “durative” - is still preserved. Thus he explains a number of biblical *hithpa’el* forms that seem neither to have reflexive nor passive meaning, but rather “iterative” or “habitative”. Speiser refers to the following verbs: *’ābal* ‘to mourn’, *’ānap* ‘to be/to become furious’, *gā’aš* ‘to quake’, *nāḥal* ‘to inherit’, *’ātp* ‘to be/become weak’, *šā’ah* ‘to observe’, *hālak* ‘to go’. A link with the Akkadian form is suggested not only by the analogy in meaning, but also by the presence of parallel structures in several expressions with the root **hlk* ‘to go’. In the following example the root is used with the meaning of ‘walk together with’:

10.

α. Akkadian

<i>il-šu</i>	<i>itti-šu</i>	<i>ittanallak</i>
‘god’+ suff. pron. III m. sg.	prep. ‘with’ + pron. III m. sg.	III m. sg. pres. Gtan ‘go’

‘His god will walk with him’.

β. Biblical Hebrew - Gen 5:22

<i>wa-yithallek</i>	<i>hanôk</i>	<i>’et-hâ-’elohîm</i>
‘and’+III m. sg. ipf. hithp. ‘go’	Enoch	prep. ‘with’ + det. art. + ‘God’

‘And Enoch walked with God’.

Dombrowski (1962), instead, explains some *hithpa’el* forms (more or less the same examined by Speiser) by means of some Classical Arabic V forms with ‘durative’, ‘iterative’ or ‘frequentative’ value. The scholar comes to a conclusion close to Speiser’s one: in Biblical Hebrew different *t*-stems would have merged, with different functions.

As mentioned above, Siebesma (1991) compares uses and meanings of *nif'al* with the corresponding *hithpa'el* forms. Thus he concludes:

the hitp. expresses the active performance of an action or an emphasis which is placed more on the active action than on the undergoing of the action. The hitp. may be translated as active, reflexive, reciprocal, but rarely as passive.⁷

Siebesma also studies the relationship between *hithpa'el* and corresponding *qal*, noticing that:

The hitp. can express a nuance in meaning that may be best described as 'to behave oneself in a certain way'. [...] Therefore, these forms may at times adopt a metaphoric sense. [...] In this respect the hitp. differs from the qal.⁸

All the observations discussed so far are, to a good extent, correct. Nevertheless they seem not to be able to describe the core meaning of *hithpa'el* as a whole. At least two main points can be stressed in any case:

- *hithpa'el* does not typically express passive;
- *hithpa'el* in some cases does not express a meaning totally different from the *qal*, concerning the diathesis.

In my opinion more attention should be paid to the meaning of the basic stem. In most cases in which *hithpa'el* does not have a reflexive-passive meaning, the *qal* is intransitive or used intransitively. It might be that, for such basic stem, the translation in common western languages has somewhat shadowed their semantic and syntactic value in Biblical Hebrew.

⁷ Siebesma (1991:168).

⁸ Siebesma (1991:168).

2.3 Aramaic *t*-forms

According to Garr (1984)⁹ in the Aramaic of the ancient inscriptions both prefix and infix *t*- forms are attested for the basic stem. Nevertheless the infix form is limited to Tell Fekheriyeh inscriptions. In Samalian there is only one possible example of a *t*-form, but the interpretation is doubtful. In Deir Alla inscription, finally, prefix *t*- form of the basic and of the D stem are attested. The meaning, as results from Garr's translation, is mainly passive - tollerative: *yt'ḥzh* 'it can be seen', *ytšm'* 'it can be heard', *yt'ḥz* 'it is closed' and *ygtzr* 'may it be cut off'¹⁰. In Deir Alla inscription also examples of a *nif'al* stem have been found (e.g. *n'nḥ* 'it moans', with intransitive value), which is not the case for Ancient Aramaic nor Samalian¹¹. Finally in Samalian also internal passive is attested, in a passive participle *qtylt* (*qatīlāt*) 'killed'¹².

Tsereteli (1995) indicates also the existence of a sort of *-tan-* form, found in Bar-Rakib inscription (8th century b. C., 2nd half): *htn'bw*, interpreted as 'they requested for themselves', from the root *y'b*. This form, according to Tsereteli, is a double reflexive, constructed with both *t*- and *n*- prefix.

In Biblical Aramaic¹³ both internal passive and *t*- forms are attested¹⁴. So the conjugation system is structured as follows:

basic stem	p ^ε 'al	pē'īl	hith/'ithp ^ε 'al
D stem	pa ^ε 'el	-	hith/'ithpa ^ε 'al
H stem ¹⁵	haph ^ε 'el	hu/hoph ^ε 'al	-

⁹ Garr (1984:119).

¹⁰ Respectively Sf. I A 28, Sf I A 29, Nerab 2:4, Fekh. 23.

¹¹ Cf. Garr (1984:121).

¹² Cf. Garr (1984:130); P 8.

¹³ Cf. Rosenthal (1961).

¹⁴ Internal passive forms are attested for the perfect, but not for the imperfect.

Looking at the table given above, one might suppose that there is a sort of complementary distribution between *t*- forms and internal passive, respectively with D and H stem. Nevertheless the corpus of Biblical Aramaic is too restricted, for such a claim to be certain.

In any case, this situation represents an intermediate step in the spreading of *t*- forms through the evolution of Aramaic verbal system (cf. §1.1).

Another step is witnessed by Palestinian Aramaic verbal system, where every verbal stem has a corresponding *t*- form, but remains of internal passive are still found.

basic stem	p ^o al	ithp ^o el
D stem	pael	ithpaal
H stem	aphel	ittaphel

As indicated in Stevenson (1924): “The stems having preformative *ith* are reflexives, which serve also as passives”¹⁶.

Finally it is interesting to observe that, unlike the others *t*- forms, *ittaph'al* forms do not undergo metathesis before sibilant, nor regressive assimilation before dental. This could be an argument in favour of the secondary role of this stem inside the Aramaic verbal system, that I suggested above. This stem has an interesting shape, with an intervening vowel between the prefix and the root (which is not found in the others *t*- stems), and with redoubling of the *t*- prefix. The scholars consider the redoubling of the *-t-* as due to an assimilation of the *alef*, characteristic of the causative stem. So Duval (1969)¹⁷, referring to Syriac *ettaph'al*, says:

¹⁵ An *hithaph'al* might be attested in E 4:13, but the reading is uncertain. In Biblical Aramaic there are also residual *šaph'el* forms, with causative meaning (close to that of *haph'el*) and related residual *t*-forms *hištaph'al*.

¹⁶ Stevenson (1924:44). A number of *šaphel* and *'ištaphal* forms are still found.

¹⁷ Duval (1969:182). An analogous explanation is given in Thackston (1999:119).

Aph'al et èttaph'al suivent la conjugaison de pa'al et èthpa'al; ils ont [aleph] comme caractéristique, au lieu du redoublement, mais au passif aleph formatif se confond avec le préfixe du réfléchi ['et], dont le *taw* redoublé est écrit deux fois...

In Syriac¹⁸ the spreading of *t*-forms is complete. Three *t*-stems with reflexive and passive meaning correspond to three active conjugations.

p'al	ethp'el
pa''el	ethpa''al
aph'el	ettaph'al

Scattered remains of other conjugations are also to be found: *šaph'el* (limited to around fifty verbs), *eštaph'al* and the internal passives *pu''al* and *hoph'al* (only in participles). Nevertheless all these forms are left outside the system, and often lack a corresponding symmetrical form.

Ettaph'al stem is rarely used and many verbs express the reflexive of the *aph'el* by means of other *t*-forms¹⁹.

2.4 The Akkadian perfect

In Akkadian the *-t-* morpheme is also specialized in the expression of a real verbal tense. It is a form usually translated as a present perfect and expresses an action in the past, as related to another action (or series of actions) expressed before or implied by the context. In such a sequence, the perfect indicates the core event.

¹⁸ Cf. Nödelke (1966:100-104), Pazzini (1999:52-53).

¹⁹ Cf. Nödelke (1966:102), Pazzini (1999:53).

This form is typical of Akkadian and, even if there are some traces in the oldest Akkadian dialects, it has greater productivity and diffusion in Old Babylonian. A typical example of the use of perfect can be found in legal texts, collections of model-situations followed by appropriate judgements. Their structure is of the *protasis-apodosis* type. The *protasis* is introduced by the particle *šumma* ‘if’. The core event of the *protasis*, on which the judgement in the *apodosis* is based, is expressed by either a preterite or a perfect. If in the *protasis* a sequence of actions or situations is given, only the last one can be a perfect, whereas the others are preterites.

11. Old Babylonian - Laws of Hammurapi²⁰

<i>šumma</i>	<i>awīlum</i>	<i>alpam</i>	<i>īgur-ma</i>
‘if’	nom. sg. ‘man’	acc. sg. ‘ox’	III sg. pret. G (+ vent.) ‘rent’
<i>ilum</i>	<i>imḥassū-ma</i>	<i>imtūt</i>	
nom sg. ‘god’	III m. sg. pret. + suff. pron. III m. sg. + vent. ‘strike’	III m. sg. pf. ‘die’	

‘If a man rented an ox and a god struck it, and it has died...’.

More generally, the Akkadian perfect indicates the anteriority of an event, sometimes with a value closer to the one of a real perfect.

In Kurilowicz (1972)²¹ there is an interesting explanation of the reason why the reflexive *-t-* morpheme has spread, in Akkadian, to the expression of a verbal tense and aspect. This scholar compares the internal development of Akkadian with what happened in other languages, such as Romance languages and German. Here the passive of a transitive verb and the perfect of an intransitive verb are expressed by the same structure (Kurilowicz says there is a “structural identity”): fr. *il bat : il est battu = il meurt : il est mort*. According to him “In Akk. the form *iptaras* functioned originally

²⁰ The example is taken from Huehnergard (2005:157).

²¹ Kurilowicz (1972: 61-63).

as a passive with relation to trans. *iprus, ipris, iparras*, as a perfect with relation to intrans. verbs”. Subsequently the perfect would have been extended to all verbs, both transitive and intransitive, because of a semantic shift “from state resulting from previous action to previous action”. This change also implies the shift of *t*-forms from the derivational to the inflectional status.

A somewhat different explanation is found in Lipiński (1997), although expressed cursorily only. To establish a link between perfect and reflexivity, the author uses the category of *effective*²² “in the sense that a state is produced in someone or in something, wheter it be caused by another or by himself/itself [...] perfective originally conveys involvement of the acting subject, while preterite marks the simple past”²³.

2.5 The point of view of Arabic grammar

As I said before, Arabic has various stems built up by means of the (-)*t*- morpheme, with different functions, depending on the stem to which it attaches and also on the semantic value of the lexical root. It can be interesting to examine the classification and terminology of Arabic grammar, concerning verbal classes and stems.

In Classical Arabic the transitive verb is called *muta'addī* ‘going beyond’, while the intransitive verb is called *lāzim* ‘bound’. The two terms are quite close, also in literal meaning, to western ones. The *t*-stems (but also the *n*- stem), that western terminology calls reflexive or passive, are called in Arabic *muṭāwi'* which literally means ‘amenable’, from the verb *ṭā'a* ‘to obey’: something closer to our *tollerativum*. It has to be noticed that verbs such as *dahaba* ‘to go’, *labisa* ‘to wear/to get dressed’ both belong to the *lāzim* category. This distribution reveals a point of view slightly but significantly different from the western one.

In an Arabic grammar for Arabophones²⁴ we find the following definition for *muṭāwi'* verbs:

²² This term had already been used by Wright (1859), as related to *t*- forms.

²³ Lipiński (1997:346).

²⁴ L.A. (2004).

The derived predicates indicating *muṭāwa'at*²⁵ determine a reduction of the number of arguments of their basic verbal stem, and this happens by means of the suppression of its first argument (i.e. subject), by omission or by the introduction of a preposition²⁶

So the *muṭāwa'at*, from a mechanical point of view, is a process which implies the reduction of the verbal valency, as from its basic stem.

Comparing the definition quoted above with the literal meaning of the term *muṭāwi'* it can be assumed that Arabic *t*-forms are not intended to express actions performed by the agent on himself, or that the agent undergoes from another entity, but rather to denote situations in which the subject has lower control on the event and lower dynamicity. For example:

12. Classical Arabic, from the *Risālatun min taḥta l-mā'i* by Nizar Qabbāni

<i>ištaqtu</i>	<i>'ilay-ka</i>	<i>fā-'allim-nī</i>	<i>'an</i>	<i>lā</i>	<i>'aštāq</i>
I sg. pf. VIII 'desire'	prep. 'to' + pron. II m. sg.	'and' + ipv. II m. sg. + pron. I sg.	conj. 'that'	not	I sg. <i>mağzūm</i> VIII 'desire'

'I have desired you, but teach me not to desire'.

basic stem - *šāqa* 'to make rejoice, o make desire'

VIII form - *ištāqa* 'desire'.

²⁵ I.e. the fact of being *muṭāwi'*, the 'amenableness'.

²⁶ In Classical Arabic the agent of a passive verb is not expressed, but it is possible to indicate the inanimate cause/instrument with prepositional phrases.

3 Conclusions

In this survey I tried to list and briefly analyse the main values that the *t*- affix has expressed in the course time, throughout a number of Semitic dialects. The picture is quite complex, and it is difficult to bring back all the various usages to a single core meaning or function.

Nevertheless some suggestions for further work can be drawn from the problems raised about Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic and Classical Arabic. First of all, what has been observed about Classical Arabic suggests that the meaning of *t*-forms depends on the semantic value and properties of the root, often witnessed by the vocalization, and do not necessarily overlap those of their translations in other languages.

Second, *t*-forms should be analysed as part of a system of oppositions, from one language to another and also through the various stages of a single language. When a balance is modified, the value of the single components is also affected. This is what clearly happened in Aramaic, where the progressive disappearance of the internal passive has caused the specialization of *t*-forms in reflexive and passive functions. Maybe the cases of Biblical Hebrew and Akkadian should also be re-considered from this perspective, in the light of changes that the whole verbal system undergoes or has undergone, and of the role played by *t*-forms in a balance.

In sum, what can be said, at least about Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic and Classical Arabic is that the *t*- affix seem to convey reduction of the subject's control on the action, and a corresponding shift of perspective. *t*- forms maybe express less involvement in the event's transitivity and dynamicity, but rather: *a.* in the subject's position, viewed as undergoer; *b.* in the action itself, as with the Biblical Hebrew 'durative' or the Classical Arabic VI form.

4 Bibliographical References

- BAUER H. & P. LEANDER (1962), *Historische Grammatik der Hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testament*, Hildesheim.
- BERGSTRÄSSER (1929), *Hebräische Grammatik*, Leipzig.
- BUCCELLATI G. (1996), *A Structural Grammar of Babylonian*, Wiesbaden.
- DIEM W. (1982), “Die Entwicklung des Derivationsmorphems der t- Stämme in Semitischen”, *ZDMG* 132: 29-84.
- DOMBROWSKI B. W. W. (1962), “Some remarks on the Hebrew hithpa’el and inversative -t- in the Semitic languages”, *JNES* 21: 220-223.
- DUVAL R. (1999), *Traité de Grammaire Syriaque*, Amsterdam.
- EPSTEIN M. (1967), *Tales of Sendebār*, Philadelphia.
- GARBINI G. (2006), *Introduzione all’epigrafia semitica*, Brescia.
- GARR W.R. (1985), *Dialect Geography of Syria - Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.*, Philadelphia.
- GOETZE A.(1936), “The t- Form of the Old Babylonian Verb”, *JAOS* 56:297-334.
- GREENBERG J. H. (1950), “The Patterning of Root Morphemes in Semitic”, *Word* 6:162-181.
- HETZRON R. ed. (1997), *The Semitic Languages*, London, New York.
- HEUHNBERGARD J. (2005), *A Grammar of Akkadian*, 2nd ed., Winona Lake.
- JOÜON P. (1923), *Grammaire de l’hébreu biblique*, Roma.
- KURILOWICZ J. (1972), *Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics*, Wrocław.
- L.A. (2004): *al-luġat al-’arabiyya*, Royaume du Maroc. Ministère de l’Education Nationale, Casablanca.
- LIPÍŃSKI E. (1997), *Semitic Language, Outline of a Comparative Grammar*, Louvain.
- NÖLDELKE T. (1966), *Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik*, Darmstadt.
- PAZZINI M. (1999), *Grammatica siriaca*, Gerusalemme.
- ROSENTHAL F. (1961), *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, Wiesbaden.
- SEGAL M. H. (1958), *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, Oxford
- SEGERT S. (1976) *A grammar of phoenician and punic*, München.

- SIEBESMA P. A. (1991), *The function of the niph'al in Biblical Hebrew*, Assen - Maastricht.
- SIVAN D. (1997), *A grammar of the Ugaritic Language*, Leiden.
- VON SODEN W. (1952), *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, Roma.
- SPEISER E. A. (1955), "The Durative Hithpa'el: A tan-Form", *JAOS* 75: 118-121.
- STEMPEL R.S. (1999), *Abriss einer historischen Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, Frankfurt am Main.
- STEVENSON W. B. (1924), *Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic*, Oxford.
- THACKSTON W. M. (1999), *Introduction to Syriac*, Bethesda, Maryland.
- TROPPER J. (2000), *Ugaritische Grammatik*, Münster.
- TSERETELI K. (1995), *Grammatica generale dell'aramaico*, Torino.
- WALTKE B. K. - M. O'CONNOR (1990), *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake - Indiana;
- WRIGHT W. (1977), *A Grammar of the Arabic Language, translated from the German of Caspari and edited with numerous additions and corrections*, 3rd ed. revised by W. Robertson Smith and M. J. de Goeje, Cambridge (1st ed. 1859).